metropolitan familyhealth network

Healthwise

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A Message from the President and CEO

Dear Friends,

In May, we set aside a special time to honor and thank the women and men who are our nurses. The 2023 National Nurses Week theme is "Nurses Make a Difference: Anytime, Anywhere – Always."

National Nurses Week was instituted in 1953, and is scheduled to coincide with the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birthday on May 12th. There are over 3 million working nurses in the United States, the largest number of individuals in the healthcare workforce. At one time, nurses worked predominantly in hospitals, but today you will find also find them in schools, medical offices, senior living facilities, nursing homes, pharmacies, correctional facilities, healthcare centers like MFHN, and the homes of those who require in-home care.

We thank and applaud the registered and practical nurses who are at the heart of the quality, compassionate care we provide.

Warm regards,

Joan Dublin

Joan Dublin, RN, MPA, ACHE
President & Chief Executive Officer

MFHN Marks National Doctors' Day!

On March 29th, we gathered our physicians to recognize and thank them for their dedication in caring for the people of our community!

When Normal Worry Becomes Anxiety

Anxiety may cause rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, sweating, trembling, and a sudden and overwhelming sense of fear. Anxiety disorders were not officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association until 1980, but their history goes back centuries. Over the years, treatments consisted of herbs and balms, bathing in extremely cold water, and blood-letting using leeches.

Anxiety disorders differ from normal feelings of nervousness, and affect nearly 30% of adults at some point in their lives. They negatively affect personal relationships, job, and school work.

Generalized anxiety disorder involves persistent and excessive worry that interferes with daily activities. The worrying may focus on job responsibilities, family health, or minor matters such as household chores, car repairs, or appointments. The person may feel restless, tense, and have difficulty concentrating and trouble sleeping.

Severe anxiety disorders include panic disorder, phobias, social anxiety, and separation anxiety. Recurrent panic attacks may be accompanied by nausea, chills or hot flashes, feeling of choking, dizziness or chest pain, and fear of dying. Phobias are fears of specific activities, objects, or situations that are generally not harmful.

Social anxiety manifests as fear of criticism, judgement, rejection, and humiliation. One may avoid social activities, eating and drinking in public, speaking on the phone, and shopping. When interacting with others, one may avoid eye contact and blush or sweat.

Separation anxiety is expressed as insecurity and fear of abandonment. One may develop rapid attachment to partners or avoid commitment, refuse to be home alone or sleep without a loved one nearby, and have nightmares about separation or loss.

Agoraphobia is the fear of being in unsafe situations. One may avoid being in open or enclosed spaces such as parks, highways, movie theaters, elevators, and buses; standing in line; and going outside the home alone.

Although the causes of anxiety disorders are unknown, there may be environmental, genetic, and psychological and developmental factors. Treatment relieves symptoms so those affected can live normal, productive lives. Because anxiety disorder symptoms are often mistaken for heart attacks, it's important to get a physical exam and screening.

National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day was May 3. If you think you have an anxiety disorder, call 201-478-5800 to make an appointment with your MFHN provider.

Improve Your Balance and Strengthen Your Core to Prevent Falls

Fall injuries account for more than 8 million hospital emergency room visits each year in the United States. They include hip fractures, traumatic brain injuries, and broken bones.

Lack of physical activity, side effects of certain medications, unsteadiness when walking, and vision problems are top risk factors, regardless of age. Weak leg muscles and poor balance are leading causes of falls. Getting just 15 minutes of exercise a day can stabilize the spine, improve posture, and significantly reduce fall risk.

Here are five, no-equipment-needed exercises that target your largest muscle groups to improve balance and strengthen your core (abdomen, back, buttocks, hips, and pelvis).

Bridge. Lie on your back, feet on the floor, knees bent, and arms at your sides. Tighten your buttocks and lift your hips off the floor to form a straight line with your shoulders. Hold the position. Return to starting position. Repeat.

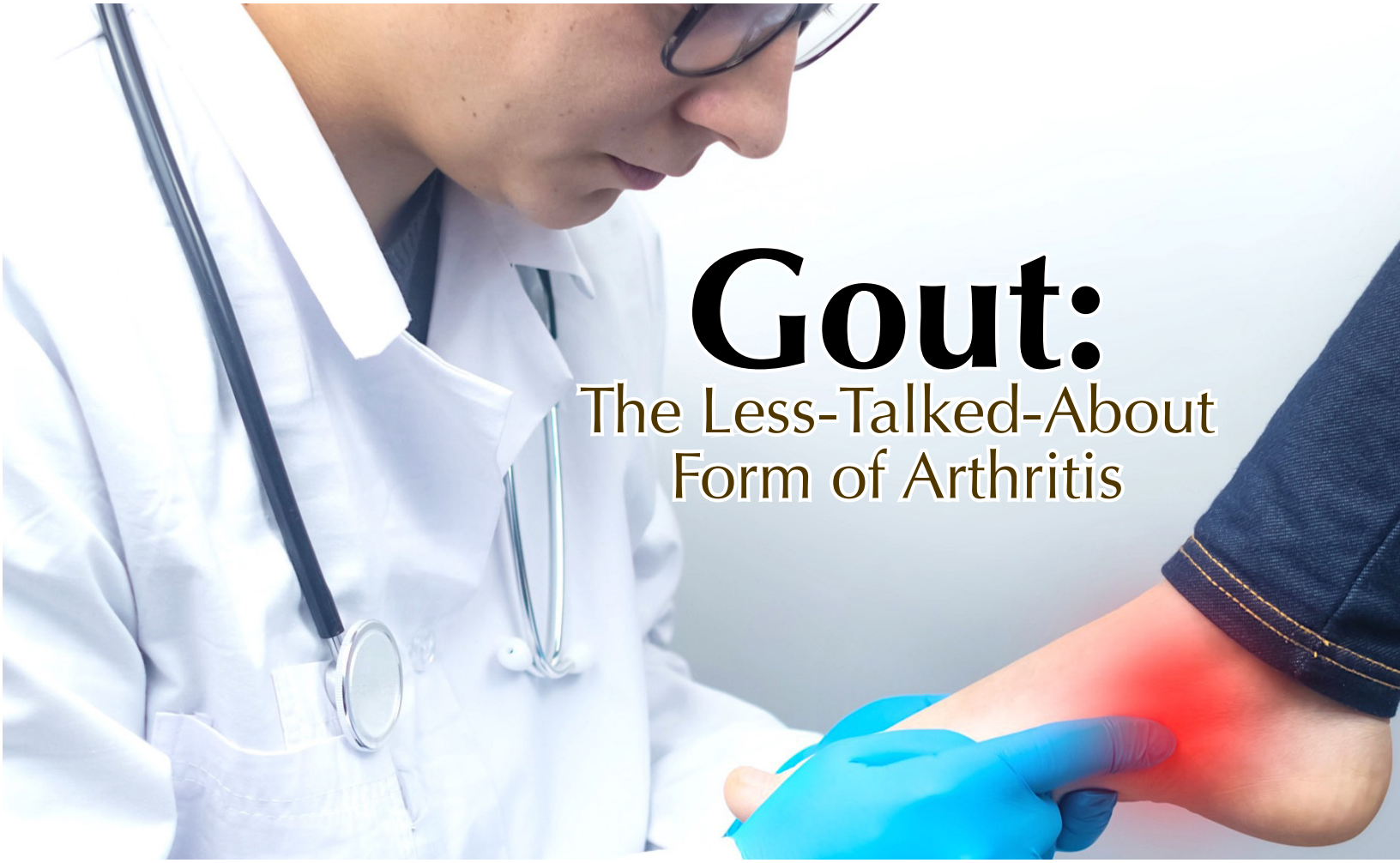
Simpler Planks. Get on your hands and knees. Raise and extend your left leg from the floor and reach your right arm out in front of you. Keep hips and shoulders steady and the extended leg and arm parallel to the floor. Repeat, alternating your right leg and left arm.

Single leg stands. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your right knee slowly and raise your leg off the ground. Straighten your leg in front of you. Hold the position as long as you can. Put your foot back down. Repeat using your left leg.

Scissors. Lie on your back, straighten legs and lift them slightly off the ground. Spread legs apart and bring them together, moving one leg under the other, like opening and closing scissors. Repeat. Beginners can do this exercise seated.

Squats. Stand with your feet apart and turned slightly out. Bend your knees and hips and lower yourself into a squat. Hold the position. Repeat. Beginners can put their hands on a wall or on the back of a sturdy piece of furniture for support. An alternate version of this exercises is to practice getting up from and stopping short of sitting on a couch, without using your arms for support.

Start slowly, breathe in through your nose, exhale through your mouth, and focus on the quality, not quantity of movements.



Gout:
The Less-Talked-About Form of Arthritis

More than 9 million Americans suffer from gout, a painful arthritic condition caused by the buildup of uric acid, a waste product in the body that is usually removed through urine. The swelling can be so debilitating, one cannot wear shoes or a wedding ring. The inflammation pain is often described as razors on fire or like being hit with a hammer. Wearing clothes or curling up under a blanket hurts the skin.

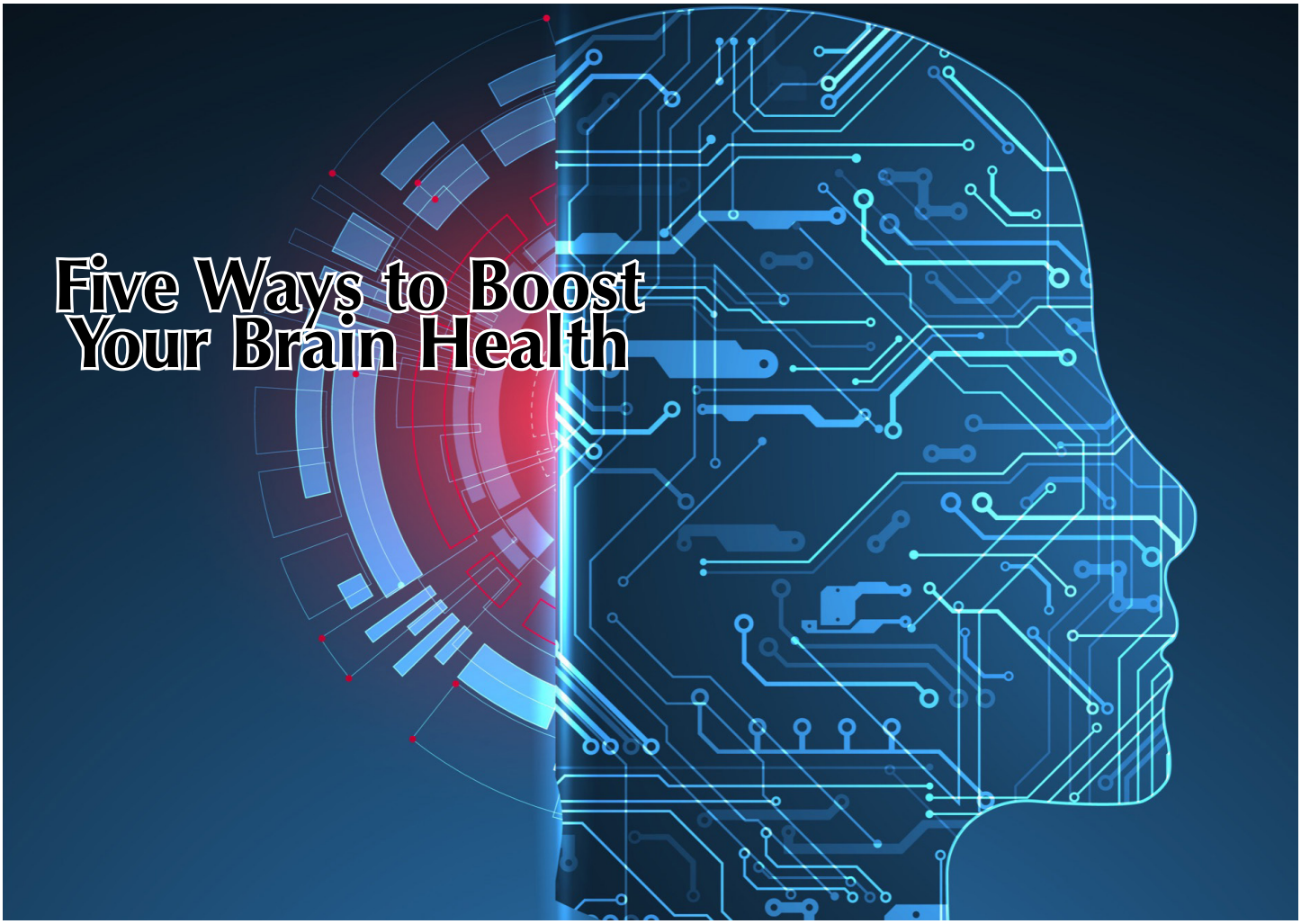
With gout, needle-like uric acid crystals deposit in the joints and cause sudden and severe episodes of pain and swelling. The redness can make a big toe look like a clown's nose. More than half of all gout attacks are in the big toe, but gout can occur in any joint, including ankle, elbow, finger, and knee. Attacks or "flares" can last for days or weeks, may interfere with one's daily activities, and cause disability.

For centuries, gout was considered a rich person's disease because it was associated with eating an abundance of steak, shellfish, wine, and beer. Animal proteins like red meat are high in "purines," the compounds that form uric acid. Alcohol increases production of uric acid and can exacerbate gout.

Gout can happen to anyone. Gout is more common in men after age 40 and women after menopause. One in 10 people with gout have chronic kidney disease. Risk factors include genetics, lifestyle, diet, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and being overweight. Gout flare triggers include certain medications like diuretics, surgery, crash dieting, dehydration, joint injury, red meat, shellfish, alcohol, and sugary drinks.

May 22 is National Gout Awareness Day.

Gout can be managed allowing people to live normal, active lives. Untreated, gout can lead to permanent joint and bone damage. If you or a family member believe they have gout, call 201-478-5800 to make an appointment with your MFHN provider.



Everyone may forget a name, a monthly payment, or where they left their keys or glasses. These are signs of mild forgetfulness, mostly due to lack of focus. That's normal. However, memory lapses can also be caused by blood clots, concussion, drinking too much alcohol, infections in the brain, tumors, thyroid, kidney or liver disorders, medication side effects, and vitamin deficiencies.

June is Brain Awareness Month. The brain is always changing as one acquires knowledge and experience. Keeping one's brain working at its peak performance can improve overall health as well as reasoning and comprehension (cognitive function) at any age. Maintain a healthy mind by following these tips:

Eat healthfully. Brain boosting foods include avocados; berries; dark chocolate; coffee and tea; green, leafy vegetables like collards, broccoli, kale and spinach; oily fish like cod, salmon and tuna; and flaxseeds and walnuts.

Exercise your brain and body. Completing crossword or jigsaw puzzles, reading books and magazines, and playing board or card games can improve the brain's processing speed and one's memory. Physical activity like walking improves one's focus and decreases stress.

Sleep well. Adults need at least 7 - 9 hours of uninterrupted sleep. Stick to a routine of going to bed and waking up at the same time, including weekends. Avoid scrolling on a computer screen an hour before bed. Wake up to natural sunlight.

Stay connected. Humans need social connections for brain health. Talking and laughing with friends and family can stimulate attention and memory. Maintaining social connections can also reduce risk of dementia and other neurological diseases.

Try something new. Learn a new software program, join a community group, enroll in an art class, or take a different route to home, school or work. These activities challenge the brain in simple ways. And they offer a fresh approach to one's routine.

How Sleep Affects Your Overall Health

We spend about one-third of our lives sleeping. Adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. Sleep allows the body and mind to rest and "recharge." Sleep is important for hormones, immune system, and mental and physical health.

Both too much or too little sleep can negatively impact overall health. Oversleeping is associated with depression, headaches, heart disease, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes. Losing sleep leaves one tired and irritable, reduces the ability to fight infections and handle stress, and increases risk of cancer and other diseases.

Alcohol and caffeine, anxiety and depression, lack of exercise, staying up late, stress, and too much screen time can interfere with sleep. Sleep debt is not something to be fixed with coffee, fresh air, and sugary snacks. Follow these tips to fall asleep faster and wake up rested:

Get moving every day. Walking, running, sports, yoga and strength training regularly can make falling asleep easier. Engaging in regular physical activity reduces the risk of insomnia or waking up in the middle of the night.

Set up a dark, comfortable sleep space. Use an eye mask to block out light sources. Restrict bed activities to sex, sleep, and light reading.

Stay consistent. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends. If your internal "clock" wakes you before the alarm, it's a sign of getting the right amount of sleep.

Take a nap. Sleep debt is more common in people who perform shift work, like construction trades, factories, law enforcement, medical fields, service industries, and transportation. While a 20-minute snooze will not make up for hours of sleep debt, it can increase mental sharpness.

Turn off distractions. Resist checking emails and social media, watching TV, and other electronic distractions one hour before bedtime. The blue light on digital screens can delay sleep.

Talk to your MFHN provider if sleep debt interferes with your daily life. A physical exam can rule out underlying sleep disorders.

You can taste, touch, smell, see, and hear thanks to your brain. Your brain stores your memories and handles your emotions. It controls your breathing and heartbeat. You can walk, talk, learn, create, and choose vanilla, chocolate or strawberry ice cream because your brain helps you make decisions.

Your brain weighs about 3 pounds – about the same as a bag of apples. This wrinkly mass has about 100 billion neurons that can send 1,000 electrical signals per second through your body. Neurons move information at different speeds. The fastest is about 250 miles per hour! That's why you can grab a pen before it rolls off a desk.

Your brain helps you to learn and to understand feelings. When you learn to ride a bike, your brain remembers each practice so you get better. When you do homework, your brain remembers what you studied and adds it to the things you already know. You can brush your teeth, get dressed for school, and tie your shoes all because you trained your brain. When you feel happy or sad, your brain makes you laugh or cry. When you are angry or nervous, your brain could make you want to be alone or yell and scream.

To keep your brain working you need physical play time, reading and playing games, eating healthy foods, and sleeping 9 to 11 hours each night. Your brain will not be fully developed until you are 25 years old. How well it will work depends on you!